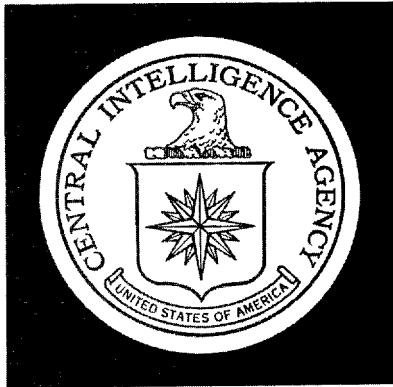


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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

## MEMORANDUM

### *The Situation in Vietnam*

State Department review completed

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111

19 March 1967

25X1

Approved For Release 2004/11/03 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001700010065-6

Approved For Release 2004/11/03 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001700010065-6

Information as of 1400  
19 March 1967

HIGHLIGHTS

The entire constitution was approved by the Constituent Assembly on 18 March and accepted without amendment by the Directorate and the Cabinet the following day. Although the final version is a compromise between the extreme positions of both the assembly and the Directorate, it was the assembly which was granted most of the concessions in the final hours.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
There are tenuous indications that elements of at least four North Vietnamese Army regiments may be preparing for major offensive operations in Quang Tri Province, the purpose of which may be to divert allied attention from the infiltration of NVA units into western Quang Tri (Paras. 1-4).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:  
Premier Ky has secured the approval of the constitution by both the Constituent Assembly and the government in time for the Guam conference (Paras. 1-7).

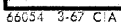
IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Vietnamese Communist propaganda has alleged that the Guam conference will result in further escalation of the war (Paras. 1-2). The World Peace Council will reportedly stress the Vietnam issue in the next several months (Paras. 3-4). Hanoi has reiterated its opposition to any UN role in the settlement of the war (Paras. 5-6).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. There are tenuous indications that elements of at least four North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regiments may be preparing for major offensive operations in the Con Thien - Gio Linh area of South Vietnam's northernmost province, Quang Tri.

3. The reported disposition of the enemy units, if valid, places the Communists in a position to attack either Con Thien or Gio Linh in multi-regimental strength, or both simultaneously in multi-battalion strength, and to ambush reinforcements deployed to either objective. At least two heavy weapons battalions, containing 120-mm. mortars and possibly Chinese Communist and/or Soviet-made rockets, are believed available to support enemy offensive activity in this region.

4. ARVN airborne task force elements and US Marines regularly operate between and alternatively defend Con Thien and Gio Linh. Both positions have in the past been subjected to frequent heavy mortar attacks, particularly the US 175-mm. long-range artillery emplacements at Gio Linh. Should the enemy choose to initiate large-scale offensive thrusts in the Con Thien - Gio Linh area, their real objective might well be to divert allied attention from the continuing infiltration of NVA units from the

19 March 1967

I-1

DMZ and Laos into the western portion of Quang Tri Province. [REDACTED] indicate that in early March two NVA regiments entered western Quang Tri from Laos along known infiltration routes northwest of the allied special forces camp at Khe Sanh. Khe Sanh itself has been harassed by mortar and small-scale probing attacks five times thus far in March, indicating continued enemy presence in and close reconnaissance of the camp.

19 March 1967

I-2

## II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The entire constitution was approved by the Constituent Assembly on 18 March and accepted without amendment by the Directorate and the Cabinet on the 19th. Although the final version is a compromise between the extreme positions of both the assembly and the Directorate, it was the assembly which was granted most of the concessions in the final hours.

2. The compromise is the direct result of Premier Ky's private parleys with selected assemblymen in a series of nightly meetings last week, which were apparently not attended by the rest of the Directorate. The acceptable formula was achieved on the evening of the 16th, and Ky and the assembly delegation then proceeded to sell the compromise package to the Directorate and the rest of the assembly. In the meantime, the other Directorate members had drafted a final list of recommended changes which were actually read to the assembly deputies on 17 March. However, Ky was able to inform the secretary general of the assembly shortly thereafter that he had received the approval of Thieu and the rest of the Directorate for the compromise he had arranged.

3. In the final meeting between Ky and the assembly delegation, the main point of disagreement was the specific status of the Directorate, pending the election of a president. Once the deputies bought Ky's formula to keep the Directorate in power until the election, Ky granted the assembly practically every other concession it had desired, including the election of province chiefs, and the authority to vote "no-confidence" in the Cabinet.

4. The compromise version specifies in addition that the assembly will draft and approve the laws for the presidential and assembly elections, the laws organizing the supreme court and the inspectorate, and the laws governing political party and

19 March 1967

II-1



press regulations. It will also have the power to ratify treaties. Following the election of the national executive officers, the assembly will assume full legislative powers until the first regular national assembly is convened. Elections for the regular assembly must be held within 12 months after the president takes office.

5. In his personal bid to arrange a quick, final agreement on the constitution, it appears that Ky risked future Directorate unity for the sake of presenting a finished document to the United States at the Guam Conference. The reaction in the Directorate, at least from Thieu and the civilians who had pursued a less lenient policy with the assembly, was one of irritation, according to the US Embassy. In approving the document, the Directorate has set aside private differences at least until after the Guam conference. According to Tran Van An, however, the civilians on the Directorate are considering resigning after the constitution is promulgated, possibly in protest over their lack of influence on the final decision.

6. Ky is certainly not unaware of the effect his deal with the assembly will have on his presidential potential. He may have calculated that the rise in his stock among nonmilitary organizations which will provide future support to the government would more than offset the risk of his losing the confidence of the civilian Directorate members and Thieu's supporters.

7. It is possible that some further disagreement over the exact terms of the constitution could still be voiced by the Directorate after the Guam meeting. Reportedly, the document will now be submitted to the Congress of the Armed Forces, the theoretical locus of final authority under the present governmental charter. Although action by this body is usually only a formality, it could be used to overturn the compromise as it now stands.

19 March 1967

II-2

25X1

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Approved For Release 2004/11/03 : CIA-RDP79T00826A001700010065-6

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

19 March 1967

IV-1

## V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Vietnamese Communist propaganda over the weekend took the line that the Guam conference was being held to plan "new war expansion" so as to cover up the "major military defeats" suffered by the US during the past year. Typical of these statements was an authoritative "Commentator" article in the Hanoi party daily, Nhan Dan, broadcast on 18 March which, in addition to stressing the "escalatory" nature of the meeting, employed tough and unyielding language to underscore the Vietnamese Communists' determination to continue the war.

2. The article declared that the Vietnamese people have made "all necessary preparations" to meet any new escalation and quoted Ho Chi Minh's 17 July statement of last year to the effect that "the war may last still 5, 10, 20 years or longer; Hanoi, Haiphong and other cities and enterprises may be destroyed but the Vietnamese people will not be intimidated." Commentator discounted US statements about negotiations as "tricks" designed to hide further escalation and stressed that the US should give up the illusion that it could negotiate on a position of strength. The article closed by emphasizing that the Vietnamese people will eventually force the Americans to "reconcile themselves to their defeat and settle the Vietnam problem on the basis of the DRV's four points and the five points of the Liberation Front."

### World Peace Council to Stress Vietnam Question

3. The Vietnam question will be virtually the sole focus of attention for the world peace movement over the next several months, according to remarks reportedly made by Romesh Chandra, Secretary General of the World Peace Council (WPC). Chandra indicated that, to form the widest possible front on the Vietnam issue, the WPC will concentrate on calling for the banning of US bombings of North

19 March 1967

V-1

Vietnam while giving less emphasis to the specific demands of the North Vietnamese and the Liberation Front.

4. If the WPC takes such a step, it will fit in well with the Vietnamese Communists' continuing efforts to garner world-wide support for their position on the war, especially that portion of it calling for a halt in the bombings. Both Hanoi and Liberation Front propaganda in recent weeks have given extensive play to statements of support for their cause issued by world bodies, especially those made by such Communist-dominated international groups as the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization and the "Tricontinental Peoples Movement." A lengthy editorial in the North Vietnamese party daily on 18 March, for example, offered high praise for the "week of solidarity with Vietnam" presently being conducted by the "Tricontinental Movement." It declared that such support proves that "the more the US imperialists intensify their aggression, the bigger their defeats and isolation and the greater support the world's peoples lend to the Vietnamese people."

#### Hanoi Hits UN Action on Vietnam

5. A North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesman on 19 March reiterated Hanoi's opposition to UN "interference" in the Vietnam question. The spokesman alleged that the US is "again" attempting to use the UN to interfere in Vietnam, and asserted Hanoi's view that the UN has "no competence whatsoever" to deal with the problem.

6. The spokesman declared that to demand "a de-escalation and cease-fire" in Vietnam while US troops are still "occupying" the country, is to demand "surrender" by the Vietnamese people to the aggressors. There have been press reports that authorities in the UN have made a new proposal for arranging a peace settlement which possibly includes a cease-fire as a first stop.

19 March 1967

25X1

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